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The World Bank
INTERNATIONAL BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

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April 26, 1989

Mr Christian Azar
Gibraltarg 82, Room 109
412 79 Goteborg
Sweden

Dear Mr. Azar,

Thank you for your letter of March 22 addressed to Mr. Conable and enclosing the Portuguese news release dated May 20, 1988 quoting statements issued by "Peace is Possible in East Timor".

The information contained in the enclosed news release is incorrect on several counts. Concerning Bank financing, the Bank's current Population Project initiated in 1985 is only financing family planning activities in areas newly resettled in Indonesia (which do not include East Timor) and the project does not finance provision of contraceptives. The project did finance construction of offices and a training center in Jakarta for the National Family Planning Coordinating Board (BKKBN). The construction component had a national coverage for offices and buildings were erected in all provinces, including East Timor.

The Bank's population missions in February and July, 1988, have discussed the subject of alleged coercion by the program in East Timor. While there may have been isolated cases of over zealousness on the part of the family planning workers to offer services when the program started, the Government (both Ministry of Health and BKKBN) had taken necessary precautions through supervisory visits and in directives to their personnel, to avoid recurrence of similar situations. We understand that the government's program in East Timor was emphasizing maternal and child health care and nutrition, in view of the high rate of infant and maternal mortality (higher than the national average). Expenditures were higher on a per capita basis because of the need for a more comprehensive program (including health interventions) and more difficult access to the population. Higher expenditures for family planning are necessary to start up activities and when other infrastructure (health, roads, transportation) is deficient. The Bank support to Indonesia's family planning program is provided in coordination with UNFPA (the United Nations Population Fund); UNFPA staff and consultants have visited East Timor recently and have not observed any differences in handling of the family planning program, compared to other parts of the country. If anything, the program in East Timor is more low key.

There is mention that the program is using Depoprovera which is described as "banned in most developed countries" and implies that the contraindications to its use exceed other forms of contraception. The allegation that it is banned in most countries is totally misleading. The use of Depoprovera has the endorsement of the World Health Organization and all leading industrialized countries with the exception of the United States. The only other major country which does not use Depoprovera is India, which has

Depoprovera has no more contraindications to its use than other steroid-based contraceptives such as the oral contraceptive pill and Norplant, now widely used in Finland. Depoprovera has proven to be an increasingly popular contraceptive in Indonesia, and currently accounts for about 20% of total contraceptive acceptors. The main issue relating to Depoprovera in Indonesia has been a decision to reduce the Government supply on cost grounds hoping that acceptors would accept less expensive contraceptives. Evidence so far suggests that acceptors prefer to pay the relatively high cost of Depoprovera in the private market than switch to an alternative, but less costly method of contraception.

The Bank subscribes to the principle that acceptance of family planning has to be on a voluntary basis. The Bank has received no evidence that this principle is being contravened in Indonesia and expects to continue supporting Indonesia's family planning program.

On behalf of Mr. Conable I would like to take this opportunity of thanking you for bringing the news release to our attention.

Yours sincerely,

Clifford Gilpin

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Chief, Population and Human Resources Division
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